



SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Washington, DC 20423

E0-181
R21

Section of Environmental Analysis

FD 34284

November 5, 2004

Dear Interested Party:

The Surface Transportation Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) is pleased to provide you with the enclosed Executive Summary of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Southwest Gulf Railroad Company's (SGR) proposed rail line construction in Medina County, Texas. The proposed rail line would extend approximately seven miles from a loading track at a proposed Vulcan Construction Materials, LP (VCM) quarry to the Del Rio subdivision of the Union Pacific Railroad Company (UP), near Dunlay, Texas. SGR would use the new rail line to transport limestone from the proposed quarry to the UP rail line. Operations over the rail line would be two round trips or four total train trips per day (two empty trains moving from the UP rail line to the quarry and two loaded trains moving from the quarry to the UP rail line).

SEA prepared the Draft EIS pursuant to the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act and related environmental regulations. The Draft EIS discusses the potential environmental impacts that could result from the construction and operation of the proposed rail line and includes SEA's preliminary recommendations for mitigating possible environmental effects. The Draft EIS reflects SEA's independent analysis and considers the views of the public, as well as Federal, state, and local agencies.

Availability of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement

SEA has distributed the Draft EIS to all parties of record, including key governmental agencies and other appropriate entities. SEA has made the Draft EIS available for review in the Hondo Public Library (1011 19th Street) in Hondo, Texas, the Castroville Public Library (802 London Street) in Castroville, Texas, and the San Antonio Central Library (600 Soledad) in San Antonio, Texas. The entire document is also available on the Board's website at www.stb.dot.gov.

Public Comment and Review of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will publish a notice in the Federal Register announcing the availability of the Draft EIS. This notice starts the public comment period which will last for 60 days. The notice should appear on November 12, 2004, and all comments must be postmarked no later than **January 10, 2005**.

The public and any interested parties are encouraged to make written comments on all aspects of the Draft EIS. SEA also welcomes comments at this time on the Programmatic Agreement, set forth in Appendix I of the Draft EIS. The Programmatic Agreement would guide and regulate the procedures by which the identification and treatment of cultural resources would occur. SEA will consider all comments in preparing the Final EIS, which will include SEA's final conclusions on potential significant impacts and SEA's final recommendations, including mitigation. The Board will then make its final decision regarding this project and any environmental conditions it might impose. When considering whether to grant final approval of the proposed rail line construction and operation, the Board will consider the potential environmental effects and any environmental mitigation it might impose on the project.

When submitting comments on the Draft EIS and the recommended environmental mitigation, please be as specific as possible. If you wish to submit written comments regarding this Draft EIS, please send an **original and two copies** to the following address:

Surface Transportation Board
Case Control Unit
Washington, DC 20423
Attn: Rini Ghosh
STB Docket No. FD 34284

Written comments may also be filed electronically on the Board's web site, www.stb.dot.gov, by clicking on the "E-FILING" LINK. Comments are due by January 10, 2005.

Public Meetings

In addition to receiving written comments on the Draft EIS, SEA will host public meetings on the Draft EIS at the location, date and times listed below. At each meeting, SEA will give a brief presentation and interested parties may submit written comments or make oral comments. Both meetings will follow the same format and utilize the same agenda; it is not necessary to attend both meetings. SEA will have a court reporter available at each meeting to ensure that oral comments are accurately recorded.

Meetings will be held at the following location and at the date and times indicated below:

Medina County Fair Hall
733 FM 462 N
Hondo, Texas 78861

Meeting 1: Thursday, December 2, 2004 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Meeting 2: Thursday, December 2, 2004 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Persons will be called to speak at each meeting in the order in which they sign in upon arrival. SEA would like as many persons to participate as possible, and given the limited amount of time at each meeting, all speakers are strongly encouraged to prepare summary oral comments, and submit any detailed comments in writing. SEA also encourages groups of individuals with similar comments to designate a representative to speak for them. Each speaker will have an allotted time limit of three minutes in which to make oral comments. Those wishing to speak more than once must wait until all new speakers have had an opportunity to comment. Those wishing to speak at both meetings will be accommodated as time allows and only after all new speakers have had an opportunity to participate in the second session.

SEA is committed to providing fair and equal opportunity for community members and agencies to comment on the Draft EIS. Accordingly, SEA has established the following meeting protocols:

- Doors will open 30 minutes before the meeting.
- Demonstrations and protests are not permitted in the meeting room. Any demonstrations, protests, petition efforts, and literature distribution must not disrupt the public comment and sign-in activities. SEA staff will designate a location for demonstrations, protests, petition efforts, and literature distribution.
- Signs and placards are potentially disruptive of public comment opportunities. No signs or placards larger than 18 inches square will be permitted in the meeting room.
- Individuals or groups who disrupt the public meeting will be asked to leave.

Those needing special accommodations are requested to contact SEA at least 10 days prior to the meeting at the number listed below (TDD for the hearing impaired 1-800-877-8339).

Thank you for your interest and participation in the environmental review process. If you would like additional information about the environmental review process, please contact SEA's Project Manager for this project, Rini Ghosh, at (202) 565-1539.

Sincerely,



Victoria Rutson
Chief
Section of Environmental Analysis

Enclosures